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Public Scoping Comments (Question/Answer Format)
 Tuolumne Meadows Public Scoping Meeting, Parsons Lodge
 August 28, 2006

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 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

What would you like to see protected along the Tuolumne River and Tuolumne Meadows?

- The animals and plants
- The river banks and all the way down to the river
- The solitude
- Air quality
- Upper meadows and creeks
- Animals habitats
- Protect river values both inside and outside the corridor.
- "This place is about as natural as any place could be" (largely inaccessible ~9 months/year)
- There's something here for everyone.
- It's a gateway to wilderness like no other place on earth – protect this.
- We like the funky look of the campground – keep it this way!
- Store /Campground – I would hate to see a hard-sided structure. The pulled apart look suits this place and the experience.
- Welcome people, but teach them (i.e., ranger programs, etc.)
- Cars along the Tioga Road at Cathedral Lakes trailhead mar the view of the meadow. Bring back off-road parking area.
- Protect the meadow, but preserve the tangible connection of feet on earth. Walking through the meadow vs. being focused on boardwalk. Perhaps place boardwalks in areas that are particularly affected, but keep other areas open for discovery.
- Trails are so dusty, more so than 20 years ago. Horses are beating up trail, which pushes hikers to outside of trail, which in turn pushed impact to the shoulder which widens trail.
- I like things pretty much the way it is. "I always come after the bugs and after the people (after Labor Day)".
- "I want the animals to be safe."
- Keep it wild – the less human footprint the better. If it brings things back to a more wild state, take it out (e.g., horses, campground, etc.).
- To keep this place for my kids and for their future, minimize the commercialism. Keep it wild.
- If we destroy or affect the natural balance, it's us to us to fix it.
- Educate day-users before they hit the trail (like what they do in Glacier/Denali to make people bear aware). Watch educational video.
- Protect this place from people – especially those who cause damage or trample meadow off trail.
- Keep it wild as possible by keeping it not so accessible.
- Need better signage in campground. You can't tell what is the road and what is a campsite.

What do you love about Tuolumne River and Tuolumne Meadows?

- The remoteness

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- High Sierra climate
- The sounds of undisturbed nature
- Solitude, peace, quiet, wildlife, peaceful river, accessibility to backpacking and hiking to backcountry camping, being away from the hectic crowds of the valley!
- What happens to the values and land outside of the river corridor boundary?
- How efficient and effective will the public scoping period be if the plan has to incorporate all the other laws and court case on MRP? Let public see what is legal under the post court case – prescription of those acts and then try and do a plan.
- This is a unique place because for 9 month no one is up here. When it opens it is as natural as can be.
- There is something here for everyone.
- Climbers, day-hikers, campers, know why they are here.
- Gateway to Wilderness like no place else on earth – need to keep it that way.
- Unique place because something here for everyone.
- Current facilities – water system (broken/leaky pipes) hard to get stuff fixed. Provide resources to get existing facilities fixed.
- Light and heat in campground bathrooms would make a lot of people happy.
- Facilities are more run-down since 10-15 years; not quite as good as they used to be. Not kept up.
- Mixed feelings about condition of facilities. People like the old funky facilities.
- 20 years – moaning and groaning is part of the experience.
- Sad to me if brand-new, nice, restroom facility/solid wall structures – adds to the really unique experience you get here.
- A certain type of person comes here (come back/love it). Hate to see changed as far as new structures built.
- Open Tioga Road before Olmstead Pt. is ready, allow access from eastside.
- Skiing in Tuolumne Meadows is a unique experience/skiing along the river.
- A little cleaner in High Sierra Camps and getting answers from people/No one knows where they are in the system (wilderness reservation system) - not as well maintained as they have been in the past.
- Campground should stay same: clean-up/better maintained.
- Accessibility? If we are planning, should think about making an area in campground wheelchair accessible.
- People think they cannot drive into Valley; “should be able to be here and enjoy it – how many people should be allowed – it’s a hard question to deal with but needs to be addressed.
- Welcoming people and teaching (teach children how to not feed the bears) – need more of that!
- I wouldn’t put more buses in the Tuolumne Meadows. Not from Lee Vining/ in Tuolumne Meadows rather.
- Newspaper should show shuttle bus stops with restrooms etc./ Buses will stop if can pull off road safely.
- Off-road parking at Cathedral Lakes trailhead – put it back in! Forcing people to park in a dangerous way, not an attractive site when first coming into meadows.
- Tangibility of “foot on soil” makes people fall in love with this place? I’m at an impasse- “feet on earth” vs. “feet on ground”. Feet on ground vs. a board allows for rock, insect, plant

inspection and opportunities for teaching ecology. What is better (small place suffer) to protect everything else?

- Boardwalks on parts/others left open.
- Old Pothole Dome trail from parking lot to dome; example of a successful project to redirect impacts out of meadows.
- People have been very good about following signs and old trail is hardly noticeable.
- Tenaya Lake: woman bathing with bar of soap – should have looking in brochure for info. She saw sign on Dana Fork and assumed that because there was no sign at Tenaya Lake it meant it was okay. Signs in one place and not another can send mixed messages.
- Nothing in newspaper that talks about water quality and how to protect it.
- Trail from road to Parsons – main trail to bridge could be improved, direct trail indicated- signage is poor and directs people to Soda Springs when they want to come to the lodge.
- Tree encroachment: If the park actually cutting those down because encroaching on meadows? Related to water table? Some day it would naturally turn into a forest, but it sounds like that's not what the NPS wants to do. Good to know that putting road in is why the trees are being removed.
- Intervention when it's for the best: Merced High Sierra Camp story regarding thickness of forests and why prescribed burning is important – eye-opening experience. Education is key to understanding why NPS is taking the action it is.
- Human manipulation goes in circles (e.g., blasting of El Cap moraine triggers human manipulation).
- Educating people is a big part of understanding management plans (even other parks).
- We need more information- we got here by accident!
- Impromptu meetings could have information about it and passed out at gates (1/2 sheet flyer).

What do you do in Tuolumne Meadows or along the Tuolumne River?

- The river...it's fun to play in. We watch the fish and play with rocks.

What kinds of services would you like to see offered, improved, or removed in Tuolumne Meadows?

- I wish non-backpackers would see Waterwheel Falls. (Example: horseback rides).
- Improve on the roads at the campground. The RVs have a very hard time when parking.
- Bird watching tours
- Open campgrounds by river (Merced River) – Rivers Campgrounds
- When Tenaya Lake campground was closed/removed NPS promised to build another one. It was never built.
- Improve reservations systems for lodging and camping.
- Open Tioga Road earlier – why are waiting so long? Spring is a great time to be in Tuolumne Meadows (May – early June).
- More loop-trail systems.
- Open Tioga Road east through Tuolumne Meadows each year (avoiding Olmstead Point).
- Change policy on road opening. You're keeping people out in the best time of the year.
- Improve roads
- Keep water systems going – improve.

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- Maintain
- Plan should provide resources to get “those things done” (such as water system improvement, building maintenance)
- Light and heat in campground bathrooms
- Facilities are more “run down” than they were 15-20 years ago – not kept up.
- I’ve heard from people that they want things (campgrounds) the way they are.
- I’ve come for 20 years ~ rustic conditions are part of the experience. New modern bathrooms may not fit in.
- Store should be there.
- Most people accept Tuolumne Meadows the way it is.
- Fix buildings; don’t build new ones.
- Regarding early Tioga Road opening: can personnel issue with opening road earlier be resolved with volunteer help?
- I’d like to have High Sierra Camps cleaner. Since DNC took over I’m not sure what the High Sierra Camp reservation/cancellation system is all about (how it works).
- Campgrounds should be cleaned up/updated. Camp bathrooms should be accessible.
- I’m here because I think people should be here, but how many? How many are allowed in backcountry before it’s overwhelmed?
- Shuttle bus is good – adequate. No more buses – adequate – no more in Tuolumne Meadows.
- Newspaper/map should show bus stops/schedules.
- Should be able to get off where you wish.
- Off-road parking at Cathedral Lakes trailhead needed. Unsafe parallel parking along roadside now. Shift parking away from creek but provide parking.
- People should be able to be in the meadows, in the pathways or would it be best to provide boardwalks? I’m at an impasse. Boardwalks may not offer similar experiences as walking on the earth.
- Boardwalk parts of meadow near street to Parsons. Maybe smaller social trails could be earth trails not boardwalks.
- Signing should be consistent. Newspaper/map should speak to water quality protection. Entrance gate handouts should be more recent; gates should receive most recent info- not outdated material.
- Trail from road to Parsons Lodge. Main path should be improved. Signing needs improvement as people wander around wondering where to go, creating more social trails. Indicate the most direct route to Parsons Lodge.
- We should mitigate what we’ve done on the past (i.e., Lodgepole Pine removal)
- Next round of scoping needs more advertising.
- Maybe print ½ page sheets about meeting dates/times and hand out at gates.
- Fresno, LA, SF are good scoping areas (Reno too), Orange County – LA area – “pull in from San Diego”, southern Ventura County, Bend, Oregon.
- Trails are dusty. Keep horses off.
- Day use limitations may be necessary.
- Roadside parking dangerous near Soda Springs trail/Cathedral lakes trailhead. Keep everything else the way it is.
- New parking lot could be extension of the campground.
- ‘D Loop’ in campground is close to road. New parking lot could be put in there.

- Keep parking/campgrounds the way they are (a few things can be improved).
- No lights in bathroom, but have HEAT. It gets cold.
- Day to day maintenance needs to be done – it's been deferred.
- Leave it the same or take some stuff away to leave it wild – Take stables out 'cause horses trample.
- Take out RV camping – backpacking only.
- Thank you for not making us go up to a microphone – it would be intimidating.
- If you do anything to destroy natural balance then we should repair/restore it. Reference to Lodgepole pine thinning along Tioga Road, prescribed fires – forest ecology.
- I'd pay for a wilderness permit if funds help better manage wilderness/SAR efforts.
- Poll day users regarding need for bear proof food storage units: Great!
- ½ sheet given out in camps to verify that camper acknowledge that it is that needs to be properly stored to prevent bear activity – they have to sign ½ sheet now – new this year – good.
- Educate day-users.
- Educate campers before visit. Have them verify (somehow) that they are aware of proper food storage techniques.
- It'd be nice if there was a way to keep the dust down (reference campground). Campgrounds are a bit crowded. Need better signage in campground.
- We need more information – we got here by accident!
- Impromptu meeting could have information about it and passed out at gates (half-sheet flier)
- Where will next series of public meetings be held? See mailing list. E-newsletter, website, press releases. Where should we be? Bay Area, Fresno, LA, Reno (lots of pp.), wherever there are big concentrations of people (Orange County or southern Ventura County).
- How many months in advance does information come out on plans and schedules?
- Bend, OR – 75,000 people; people are moving to Bend for the same type of area as Tuolumne Meadows and park.
- Backcountry experience in other parts of river will not be threatened? (We've talked a lot about the meadows; what about the Wild and Scenic portions?)
- Dusty trails (people comment that 20 years ago it was easier to hike). One answer: keep the horses off the trails.
- Limiting day-use? Seems like core of all problems we have (booth at trailheads).
- Manage people at the gates? Are they the ones tearing up the trails? Are these the people that don't go more than a mile off the trail? Average stay 4 hrs.
- Special passes for trans-route visitors. Hwy 120 is a major road; want to see a little bit, and that's fine.
- Valley visitors are going there to see the waterfalls.
- Not everyone can plan 4 mos. in advance to get a reservation/demographic problems issues.
- Do we want to pull in the person who doesn't know wilderness in the order to learn?
- The river (is what I love).
- Haven't really talked about day-use; many people don't stay because they don't have lodging and aren't prepared to tent camp.
- We try to direct people to where we don't think there will be a big problem (Dog Lake).

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- Parking: out here dangerous, big long lines, so close to road (Tioga Road near Cathedral Lakes and west of gas station). Without destroying too much; needs to be better parking near campground. Off-set, don't see from road. Downside to taking away any natural space.
- Not much space between sites and road in D loop of campground (but could use as an alternate parking place).
- Like it the way it is; Come late as possible (used to come after Labor Day but kids come as late as humanly possible) after bugs and people.
- I wish there was just money for the upkeep of things.
- The river is fun to play in/watch fish/play with rocks/6'K years old)
- Keep it as wild as much as possible; the less man-made stuff we can into this environment the better.
- If we are going to keep the park for future generations then commercialism should be kept out- I'd like to see this place the same 100 years from now.
- Campground should come out; only backpacking. Take out RV's (I hate to say it).
- Anything we do to destroy natural balance; then important to do what we can to bring it back.
- Rescue Insurance? If not the case, then I would be willing to pay to compensate/offset cost of SAR. Could money be spent on other projects/help efforts?
- Don't take bear lockers out. Put some in – polling the day-users (but ask them)- I'm a backpacker and always use bear canister. Great to see them in, so nice; I always welcome that because of so many bear-uneducated people the park.
- Remember when it was 'bear highway', the bears have learned and so nice to see improvement in number of bear incidents. Worth asking people at gate to sign a sheet that lists all of their "food" items.
- Educate day-users on trail; not necessarily limit day-use on trails. Perhaps watch video, sign permit, then go to do a day-hike – EDUCATION is key.
- Might make VC parking more saturated if this was required; but may be worth it.
- Perhaps distribute on a CD handed out at gate that people could listen to while driving through park.
- Campground people could get info in advance of arriving. Other place to pick up/drop off info to reduce # of people going to VC.
- The minute we leave we say, "when are we coming back?". This place is near and dear to our hearts.
- I think you shouldn't tell anyone about it. It's important to keep more of this park as wilderness; keep as wild and protected as possible.

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Public Scoping Comments (Discussion Format)
 Tuolumne Meadows Public Scoping Site Visit
 August 29, 2006
 Facilitators: Kristina Rylands (NPS), TRP Core Team

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NOTE: Bullets under a heading present the group discussion on a topic. Public comments are marked as "Public Suggestion" and have been coded and incorporated as official public scoping comments.

PROJECT AREA

- How far east/west will the project boundary for the TMP go?
- Scoping will help NPS define the project area
- If areas like Olmstead Point and Tenaya Lake are not considered to be within the TMP project area, then what plan includes them? Will there need to be an additional concept plan for these areas or will they be included in the WMP and/or GMP?
- Public suggestion: The NPS should make the TMP project boundary broad enough to cover a lot of areas so that we don't have to wait for another 20 years to address issues in these other areas.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

- The wastewater treatment facility is aging and posing challenges. It is not meeting state standards. NPS would like to massively upgrade the system to bring it up to state code for the next 20+ years. State knows we are out of compliance.
- The system is a secondary system (borderline).
- Water Quality is an ORV
- How are sewer ponds protected? A gate discourages visitors from visiting the area...fence is in disrepair.
- Do sewer ponds threaten wildlife?
- Does the NPS have monitoring wells? Do you test the river downstream and upstream of the spray fields?
- Public suggestion: All facilities should treat to tertiary standards, even if the state does not require it.
- Public suggestion: The NPS should look at other locations and types of facilities in similar environments as a guide. Glacier National Park may be a good place because of the winter conditions (similar seasonal challenges).
- Public suggestion: The NPS needs to address any issues relating to a waste discharge permit and/or any clean-up and abatement orders in this planning process.
- Public suggestion: Sewage piping system and treatment facility should be designed to last at least 50 years without retrofit. It is not recommended to place water pipes in/under the roadbed as repairs are much more difficult.
- Public suggestion: The NPS should not have sewer ponds and spray fields in an environment like Tuolumne.
- Public suggestion: Lodgepoles along the roadway may have been planted to screen development/wastewater facility...may want to consider this method in this plan.

TUOLUMNE MEADOWS

- There are unnatural stream bank impacts caused by human activity in the meadows.
- A list of all of the studies and data collection efforts was shared with the group.
- NPS explained that they are working with local communities, FAA, and the military to address issues with over flights in Yosemite.
- Public suggestion: The NPS needs to improve interpretive programs and waypoint exhibits in the meadows.

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- Public suggestion: The TRP should address and incorporate the Scenic Byway designation of the Tioga Road in the planning process.
- Public suggestion: Need parking nodes (similar to the type at the Tuolumne Visitor Center) especially around Cathedral Lakes Trailhead. Parking nodes are more scenic, safe and operational than roadside parking.
- Public suggestion: Restore the Cathedral Lakes parking lot that was removed several years ago. Address any archeological issues prior to doing so.
- Public suggestion: Will any studies of road kill be conducted as part of this planning process? Bears are not the only species of concern with vehicle/wildlife incidents.
- Public suggestion: Speed limits need to be enforced to protect wildlife.
- Public suggestion: The red bear/dead bear program needs more publicity so that more people know what it is and it will be a more effective program.

TUOLUMNE RIVER

- The group was requested to review the Draft ORV Report and make comments on the ORVs
- A history of Parson's Lodge was given to the group.
- Bob Hackamack, a man instrumental in the designation of the Tuolumne River, was introduced to the group.
- River boundaries were briefly discussed. Currently, the "interim" boundary is approx. ¼ mile on either side of the river, measured from the ordinary high water mark (which is being mapped this summer).
- Public suggestion: San Francisco Public Utility president recently requested and increase in size of the O'Shaunessey Dam. The NPS should consider impacts of that proposal in this plan.
- Public suggestion: What is the impact of a dam on a wild and scenic river (both upstream and downstream)?

LEMBERT DOME/DOG LAKE TRAIL HEAD PARKING AND ROAD

- What are the alternatives to having hundreds of cars parked along the roadway and meadow on this area?
- A member of the group asked if transportation infrastructure within the park follows state or federal guidelines. NPS explained that they work with Federal Highways on all transportation projects.
- Public Suggestion: Will the NPS use the 1994 transportation study specific to Tuolumne Meadows as a starting point to address parking issues in the area? NPS will need to include/reference the study or refute it in this plan.
- Public suggestion: Consider having a quota system to control the visitor experience, protect the resource and provide access.
- Public suggestion: What is the parking deficit in Tuolumne Meadows? Is there a deficit?
- Public suggestion: Travel patterns and the way people vacation needs to be considered in this plan. Traditional vacation times are an element to consider.
- Public suggestion: Could Tuolumne Meadows be opened year round to spread out visitation?
- Public suggestion: There are middle ground solutions to user capacity that NPS has not fully considered but needs to. John Buckley is sending the NPS a strategic user capacity program in which pre-planning and communication with gateway communities is a key element.
- Public suggestion: Information and communication with gateway communities regarding congestion and alternate areas to visit needs to be made a priority in the park's user capacity program. There are many things to do in gateways and other areas in the park (Hetch Hetchy) where visitors could be diverted if there was adequate communication with gateways.
- Public suggestion: Will the NPS consider the health and safety concerns of the dusty, asbestos/serpentine road base in this planning process?

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CAMP GROUND

- Public suggestion: D-Loop has more space for camping; why is it only used for Yosemite Association volunteers?
- Public suggestion: The sites in A-loop that are close to the river (site #50) need to be removed and revegetated to natural conditions.
- Public suggestion: The poor road conditions in the campground are good because people drive slower and the area is safer.
- Public suggestion: There is a lot of driving in this campground which creates dust and detracts from the visitor experience. The plan should consider addressing directional signage in the campground, possibly creating an additional entrance further west, and extending shuttle bus service within the campground to possibly reduce the amount of traffic in the campground.
- Public suggestion: Could the number of sites in the campground be reduced and still provide accommodation for the majority of the season, but not on peak use days? NPS will need to look at travel preferences and visitor experience to answer this question. Need to look at future trends vs. old patterns of visitor ship.
- Public suggestion: It is not necessary to have heat and light in the campground restrooms...rustic is enduring.
- Public suggestion: RV specialty area needs paving for safety and maneuverability on the roadway; however, paving the entire road in campground would require excessive maintenance due to the weather environment.
- Public suggestion: Add a shuttle bus stop at far end of the campground to encourage people not to drive in and out of the campground. A long walk to the store for groceries and supplies is daunting and it encourages people to drive because it is easier to transport their goods.
- Public suggestion: Does the campground track vacancy rates throughout the summer?
- Public suggestion: Demographic data is absolutely needed before expansion/reduction, and conclusions/decisions can take place regarding facilities in the corridor (i.e. Tuolumne Meadows Lodge, Glen Aulin High Sierra Camp).
- Public suggestion: Removing facilities usually means a reduced budget for operation; money is always harder to get back which is something to consider before reducing any facilities.
- Public suggestion: Need long-range projections for funding interpretive programs/rangers. Specify the balance between capital infrastructure improvements and funding the people who protect and educate.
- Public suggestion: Is stock use on trails being studied? It needs to be, especially for High Sierra Camp operations where there are huge impacts.
- Public suggestion: The NPS should look closely to see if Tuolumne Meadows Lodge is an appropriate use/operation for the meadows.
- Public suggestion: If store/grill are a part of long-term visitor service will it be made appropriate use (pulled back from river corridor/shielded from public view)?
- Public suggestion: Where does funding for these summer studies come from? Will it be long-term funding?

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Public Scoping Comments (Question/Answer Format)
Yosemite Valley Public Scoping Meeting/ Open House
August 30, 2006

Facilitators: Kristina Rylands (NPS), Elexis Mayer (NPS), Jen Nersesian (NPS)

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What would you like to see protected along the Tuolumne River and Tuolumne Meadows?

- It should be maintained as a meadow- remove Lodgepoles encroaching upon meadow.
- Restore old parking lot at Cathedral trailhead. Put lot back in – much safer

What do you love about Tuolumne River and Tuolumne Meadows?

- Wide open spaces

What do you enjoy doing in Tuolumne Meadows or along the Tuolumne River?

- Visiting Tenaya Lake
- Hiking- especially the Lembert Dome hike, it offers spectacular views with ½ the effort of climbing half dome.
- The river and streams, the sky, the landscape
- Easy access to High Country Trails
- A place to get away from other park visitors.
- Easy access to rock climbing.
- Tuolumne Meadows symbolizes high Sierra: smells, broad expanses. Many memories from early days of Yosemite with fellow workers, trails I've worked on.
- I hike, visit friends/crew members.
- I camp, watch night sky (stars)

What kinds of services would you like to see offered, improved, or removed in Tuolumne Meadows?

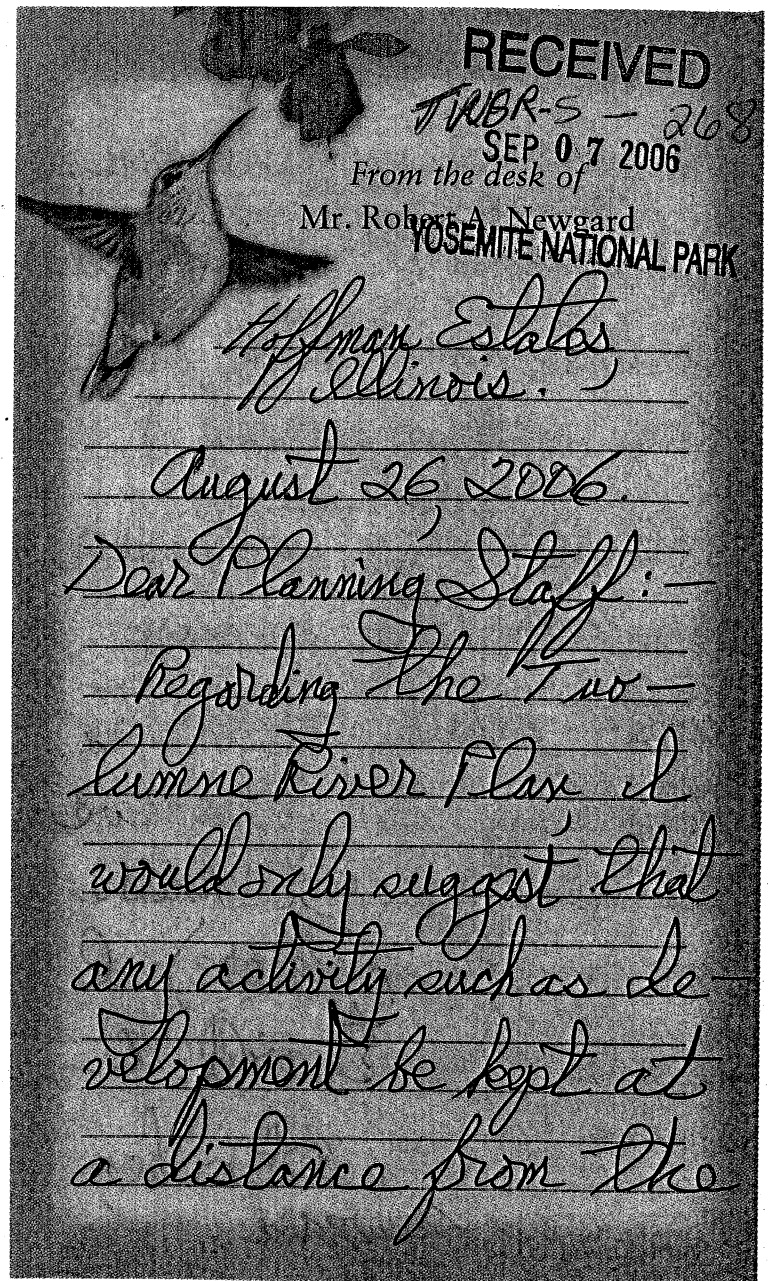
- Gaylor pit restoration
- Have to do something about social trails – need to consolidate access.
- Climbing – not just great because the physical environment but because of the access.
- Need to look at climbing destinations in terms of impacts – e.g., parking, social trails, in some cases may make sense of make access more formal; also wayfinding clues/assistance/signs.
- Social trails get so bad that people think open sandy area is the natural condition.
- Bear view – good example of where nature of use has created good, clear access, but on descent it degrades.
- Want to keep down-canyon areas (e.g., Watersheel falls, Glen Aulin) the same.
- A comprehensive education program is needed – e.g., with campfires.
- Store and surrounding area is ugly – better off with more permanent structure. Maybe make it ski lodge in the winter.
- I like the tent cabins and want them to stay. Tuolumne Lodge provides a nice compromise to people who don't backpack.
- Sewage ponds don't make sense out in the meadows.
- Architecture of flush toilet structures inappropriate for area. Get rid of mission '66 buildings.

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- Whatever we do with hard structures needs to be done with the utmost level of architectural sensitivity.
- If fuel station removed from Tuolumne and Crane Flat, creates a problem.
- Use/Create as much alternative energy as possible – e.g., solar.
- Crowding along road (parking and traffic backups) is an issue – bad for air quality.
- Consider split rail fencing along road with gaps so people can walk through.
- Change color of white structures (store, lodge, etc.) to something more natural.
- Take gas station out.
- Remove free-dump station from middle of Tuolumne. Location is inappropriate – maybe moved somewhere more upland.
- Gas station not as intrusive/ugly as store.
- Employees need to be close to their jobs – shouldn't have to drive up from Lee Vining.
- Structures should be energy efficient.
- Fix parking at Cathedral Lakes trailhead.
- First mile of trail on Lyell Fork is pretty beat up – including bridge crossing.
- From an employee: I enjoy the primitive camping (employee tent cabins) and want them left the same.
- Parking lot in Tuolumne Meadows could be a limiting factor – subtly act as a cap.
- Put employees on trail restoration (multiple ruts, historical damage)
- I don't have too many complaints (re. facilities, services)
- "Can stock areas be combined?"
- Parking along road makes it look "crowded and unsafe".
- Name part of the Mt. Dana (Lion's Head) after Ferdinand Castillo. Should have Tioga Pass named after Ferdinand Castillo and a plaque to commemorate Ferdinand Castillo.

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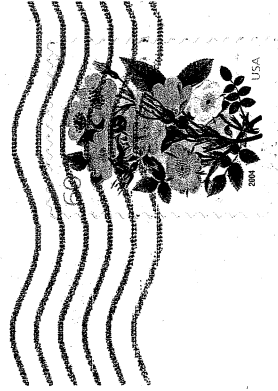
River; and riparian life
be a constant concern.
(Remember the Merced
River Plan—that plan
was well prepared.)

As for the Tuolumne
Meadows Plan restore
what needs restoration.
I believe the Meadows
is a large wilderness
(never been there); I
would keep it wild. As
always with best wishes,
Bob Newgard.

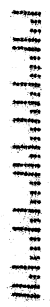
Mr. Robert A. Newgard
[REDACTED]
Hoffman Estates, IL 60192-1312

CAROL STREAM IL 601

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Superintendent,
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Michael McMillan

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YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Tuolumne Planning:

I have visited on a regular basis since 1954, both Tuolumne and Yosemite (Valley). A general comment regarding Tuolumne is to keep it from being another Yosemite Valley. That means over indulgence of the casual tourist... too many concessions, convenience stores etc. I expect it will never happen but I would advocate walk in campgrounds throughout: A big parking lot with designated camp sites a reasonable distance away. Of course this would conflict with the prevailing camping life style. I have always been a minimalist, camping at Tuolumne with mostly backpacking equipment and am appalled at the amount of 'stuff' some people pull out of their SUVs or RVs. In other words the National Parks should promote a retreat from the obsessive consumption patterns of the general public if only a modest retreat.

Michael McMillan

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RT	#S	LT	DT	UT	IA	IR	OR	TS

San Francisco CA 94118

SAN FRANCISCO CA 941

30 AUG 2006 PM 3 T



Superintendent
ATTN: Toolume Planning
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, CA
95389



Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Public Comment Form TUOLUMNE RIVER PLAN and TUOLUMNE MEADOWS PLAN

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SEP 07 2006

WBR-5 - 270
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

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Name: VICKIE M. COTTLE

Date of Comment: 8-31-06

Address: [REDACTED], DESCANSO, CA. 91916

Comments

I have camped at Tuolumne Meadows Campground for 23 of the past 30 years. The last five years, I've taken the opportunity to camp at the Horse camp with our horses.

The benefit of being in this beautiful setting refreshes and, for me, provides the potential of reconnecting with that part of me that sometimes gets lost in the everyday "rat" of living. That summer period in Tuolumne fulfills & sustains me through the year. The only improvement: A water line to space 3+4 in Horse Camp. Otherwise, I can't imagine any campground more perfect. Thank-you, Vickie M. Cottle

Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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Public Comment Form TUOLUMNE RIVER PLAN and TUOLUMNE MEADOWS PLAN

SEP 07 2006

TABR-5-273

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Pg 1 of 2

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Name: Mary Ann & James Allen Date of Comment: 8/12/06

Address: [REDACTED] Sebastopol, CA

F		4	U	X					Comments
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95472

- Keep Tuolumne Meadows as close to a wilderness habitat as possible
- Redo bathrooms at the lodge
- Tuolumne Meadows does not need a hotel/restaurant complex.
 - The subalpine habitat is too fragile
 - The existing buildings, although necessary, are already intrusive, a hotel could not be made not obvious.
 - Such development would completely over tax the capacity of the road.

over →

I understand it is not the purpose of this comment sheet, but, we strongly support the removal of O'Shaughnessy Dam and restoration of Hetch Hetchy Valley. Pg 2 of 2

Is there on-going assessment of the effect of human use on the riparian borders, especially in the vicinity of the campground & lodge on both forks?

What is being done to preserve and protect the river downstream, i.e. outside of the park?

RECEIVED

Los Angeles, CA
90068
August 28, 2006

SEP 07 2006

TRR-5-275
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Superintendent
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389

Dear Sir:

This letter is in response to the Tuolumne River and Tuolumne Meadows planning efforts currently underway.

I have a few suggestions about improving the visual landscape at Tuolumne Meadows.

First, relocate the stables. The present location is a detriment to the natural landscape at the eastern end of Tuolumne Meadows. Being situated on an elevated hillside location, the stables facilities are visible over a wide area, and from a considerable distance. A better location is south of the Tioga Road, and further back in the forest where this visibility would not occur.

The same comment applies to the present location of the market, post office, grill, climbing school, sport shop, and the filling station. Some of these are visible from as far away as Soda Springs. These facilities should be relocated further back into the campground, where again this visibility would not occur.

Beyond these relocations, no further changes should take place, and the area should be preserved as it currently exists.

Sincerely yours,



Lawrence S. Crane

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LAWRENCE



LOS ANGELES, CA 90008-2502

AUG 28

LOS ANGELES CA 900

SUPERINTENDENT
ATTN: T VOLUME
P.O. BOX 577
YOSEMITE, CA
95389

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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Public Comment Form TUOLUMNE RIVER PLAN and TUOLUMNE MEADOWS PLAN

SEP 07 2006
JTB-R-5-277
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

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Name: Allen Peery Date of Comment: 8/15/06

Address: [REDACTED] La Crescenta, CA. 91214

Comments

I have been coming up here for fishing and rock climbing for about 25 years. Any changes to the current day use of wilderness areas which further restrict access to these beautiful areas must be avoided. Due to the heavy day use of the Lyell Fork area near KUNA Crest and the popularity for wilderness camping it can get a bit crowded in the Kuna Crest area during the last 10 years.

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Public Comment Form TUOLUMNE RIVER PLAN and TUOLUMNE MEADOWS PLAN

SEP 07 2006

TUBR-5-278

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Pg 1 of 2

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Name: Marcy Heider Date of Comment: 8/17/06

Address: [REDACTED], Calabasas CA

Comments

91302

Tuolumne is a pure majestic jewel of American wilderness. My suggestions would be to keep it as rustic and undeveloped as possible. The more developed the area becomes the greater the potential for "losing it to death" will be. Therefore I think commercializing the area with hotels/hodges and shops should be prohibited. I think however the Campgrounds could be updated with a new sewer system and perhaps showers. I think any building along the river

should be evaluated for the safety ¹⁹² of
of their systems and ^{either} moved or
updated accordingly. The Tuolumne
Lodge should be updated as well.

This place is one of the most beautiful
I have ever had the privilege to
visit. I am humbled and in awe
of its landscape and topography.
~~To commercialize this place would~~
~~be a sacrilege a holy place.~~
A very spiritual and holy site -
one we would only come to regret.

Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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Public Comment Form TUOLUMNE RIVER PLAN and TUOLUMNE MEADOWS PLAN

SEP 07 2006

TUR-S-279

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

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Name: Jim Edinger

Date of Comment: 8-17-06

Address: [REDACTED] Woodland Hills CA 91367

Comments

Things I like: (1) shuttle bus - a big draw for us
(3) store & grill

(2) Park Service programs, including campfires,
Junior Rangers, etc.

Things to improve: road thru campground

discrete lights needed in bathroom
the lone Tuolumne meadows & don't want to see
any major changes, certainly no "development."

Yosemite National Park

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Public Comment Form TUOLUMNE RIVER PLAN and TUOLUMNE MEADOWS PLAN

SEP 07 2006

TUBR-5-280

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

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Name: Karen Joranko
Comment: _____

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8-19-06

Address: [REDACTED] Lodi, CA 95240

Comments

Tuolumne Camp too large. Need smaller camp grounds. Too many people in one place.

Need to minimize Human Impact

Nice if there was a bike/foot path along the road. Shuttle Bus is very nice.

Love the area. Keep it as wild as possible!

Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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Public Comment Form TUOLUMNE RIVER PLAN and TUOLUMNE MEADOWS PLAN

SEP 07 2006

TWR-5-281

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

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Name: Linda Muhlenkamp

Date of 8-18-06

Comment: _____

Address: [REDACTED], Lodi, CA 95240

Comments

Minimize Human Impact.

The campground is over crowded.

Would like to see a bike/hike trail along the road.

Love the hiking and backpacking available here.

Shuttle Bus is a great idea.

Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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Public Comment Form TUOLUMNE RIVER PLAN and TUOLUMNE MEADOWS PLAN

SEP 07 2006

TRP-5-282

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

pg 1062

All interested individuals, organizations, and agencies are invited to provide written ideas, concerns, or suggestions during the public scoping period, which closes September 7, 2006. Written comments may be mailed to: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, P.O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389 (Attn: Tuolumne Planning). Written comments may also be faxed to: 209/379-1294. Electronic comments may be emailed to: Yose_Planning@nps.gov (in the subject line type: Tuolumne Planning). Comments can also be submitted online by going to parkplanning.nps.gov/yose. Keep track of project status by regularly visiting the park's web site at www.nps.gov/yose/planning/trp.

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Name: Susan Straghalis

Date of Comment: 8-20-06

Address: [REDACTED] Castro Valley, CA 94546

Comments

The NPS mission includes making scenic areas available to the public. "The public" means families with young children, older people, active people and less active people. So some visitors to Tuolumne Meadows come to hike, backpack or rock climb while others come to sit by the river in the meadow or at their campsite. Facilities should be provided for all.

I know development is frowned upon but since the campground area is already established and the Tioga Rd. means it cannot be returned to the wilderness why not improve the campground for those who do not go far afield and keep the wilderness for those who do? The

great thing about T.Mdws is that you can go a mile^{20 of 2} or so from the campground or the road and hike all day without meeting anyone - if that is what you want (and we do!). Even the heavily used trails can be avoided. The wilderness is close by and accessible. But the campground needs to serve everyone, not just young energetic wilderness lovers.

A loop - A loop has a loyal group of fans! We are willing to wait all morning for a site with a view of the river and Lambert Dome, even though the sites might be smaller, more crowded or noisier than those out in F or G loop. Most A loop fans love and respect the environment and treat it well. Please keep A loop. Taking away these sites would leave a campground too small for the demand. Yes, the area is heavily impacted but that is the price we pay for making it available and, once again, there are still plenty of pristine areas.

Good things about T.Mdws campground:

1. The setting is beautiful - we have travelled to many places in the world but this will always be our favorite.
2. The Grill, the store and the lodge provide good service. (though maybe not quite so good since DN took over.)
3. The bear management has done a great job educating and training people. Don't relax the regulations, in fact enforce them more strictly.
4. Rangers are always friendly and polite, and even good humored when assigning sites and dealing with individual requirements.
5. Shuttle bus service is great - how can we persuade more people to use it?

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Public Comment Form TUOLUMNE RIVER PLAN and TUOLUMNE MEADOWS PLAN

SEP 07 2006

TRSR-5-301

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Pg 1 of 2

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Name: Beth Ogilvie Date of Comment: 8-20-06

Address: [REDACTED], Castro Valley, CA 94546
beth@gocuthbert.net

Comments

Suggested guidelines: Keep most of the park as wild as possible. In the
rest of the park - in areas that people use most - create facilities that
serve people as effectively as possible - people with all different abilities.
Don't try to make every square inch of the park wild or "natural"
because (a) it's impossible, and (b) it wouldn't serve visitors best.
Even in the wild parts, there are cases where some development
reduces impact (e.g. the Yos Fund project to build a ^{proper} trail on Mt. Hoffman
and eliminate the maze of use trails; putting composting toilets
in heavily used areas; etc.)

Re: T. Meadows campground, please don't eliminate "A" loop! Exp.
not the "A" loop sites with a million dollar view. These sites are

a national treasure. All the other sites are dull ordinary in-the-trees could-be-anywhere sites. And please don't reduce the number of campsites. (More would be good.) You've made it damn near impossible to get into Yos Valley campgrounds. Please don't do the same for T Mtns.

If you haven't been to the Tioga National Forest campgrounds at Tioga Lake and Saddlebag Lake, please go and look around. Every time we stay there, we think "Why can't the Park Service make good campgrounds like these?" Every site has a flat place to park and a flat place to put a tent. Don't be afraid to use a bulldozer. Cut down a few trees if necessary. Alternatively, leaving it just the way it is would be fine too except for replacing the toilets by the entrance kiosk which are frequently broken or disgusting (floor flooded w/ sewage) and putting a little gravel on the worst of the potholes.

Having half the sites reservable + half first-come-first-served is excellent. Please don't change it. I wish the Valley were like that. There's a good mix of tent & RV sites. Stricter rules about noise would be good - no music audible outside your campsite (except quiet acoustic instruments you play yourself). Why not have some electric sites and ban generators? Get Delaware North to fix the grill in the Grill. Provide decent digital cellphone coverage, at least in certain spots (e.g. by the Grill) - and not at \$5/call plus \$3/min!

I have visited Yosemite 80-100 times in the past 20 years. My partner + I spend many weeks every summer in and around T. Mtns. Please don't make it harder for us to come + enjoy this beautiful place!

Some parks in Canada have a "zero tolerance" policy towards bear offences. You leave food out - you get expelled from the park immediately. We should have that here.



"Jeffrey Maurer"



09/07/2006 07:15 PM
MST

To: YOSE_Planning@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: Tuolumne Plan Scoping Comments

RECEIVED
TWSR-283-215
SEP 07 2006
P.102
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Dear Yosemite Planning Office,
Please find Tuolumne Plan scoping comments pasted below and attached.
Thanks,
Jeff

Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan/Tuolumne
Meadows Plan EIS
Public Scoping Comments

Dear Yosemite NP Planning Office,

Here are several areas of concern I would like to submit as part of the
NEPA process regarding the above plan:

1. Retain the Seasonal/Ephemeral Nature of the Tuolumne Visitor Experience. What I really appreciate about Tuolumne Meadows is that the experience is of brief seasonal type. This is the greatest value of the Tuolumne Meadows experience - one which reminds me that this area is not impacted by visitor traffic (save the hardiest skiers relying on non-motorized access) in the winter and marginal spring and fall periods. Let the seasonal weather condition dictate the access to this area. This provides the visitor - myself - with the experience that humans, too, are seasonal migrants to the area. From this I learn and realize my own ephemeral nature on our planet, and learn to understand the natural limits of this environments. This is an important concept and cultural aspect to remind me of natural cycles, the inhospitable nature of the area in winter, and also serves to minimize impact to the fragile wetlands and hardy wildlife of the area during the non-summer period. Here, humans are seasonal visitors and should remain so.
2. Maintain visitor use contact in a non-obtrusive manner by placing visitor center, store, and lodging, and other sources of visitor contact out of view and secondary to the natural landscape of the area. The natural landscape should be the visitors' primary source of interpretation, in order to experience this western park in a state of naturalness. Encourage gateway communities to provide amenities, and limit them in the Tuolumne area. I visit this area to get away from commercialism and conveniences. Provide a store with the minimum of necessary food and camping supplies. Provision it with food for hikers and backpackers.
3. Do not increase the present footprint area of visitor facilities such as store and lodging and campsites beyond the current level. When considering consolidation of services the EIS Alternatives, do not add to the current number of existing square feet. Consider consolidation only by not expanding current footprint.
4. Limit road opening to dates between Memorial Day and the first significant fall snowfall. This will maintain the integrity of the natural resources by not impacting sensitive plant and animal communities including wetlands during late spring snowmelt. Road plowing carries

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TWSR-283-215
p. 292

significant wildlife hazards and should be limited to the currently practiced window.

5. Eliminate NPS and concessionaire stables and horse and stock use in the Tuolumne area including at High Sierra Camps. This practice considerably impacts trails through trail erosion and degradation, requiring considerable regular maintenance and restoration, impacts wilderness experience through backcountry exceptions to the wilderness concept and intent, degrades water quality through trail erosion and siltation, and degrades meadow integrity through free range grazing of stock. This area is too fragile to sustain these impacts, despite the historical nature of this use.

6. Maintain seasonal non-permanent structures for most employees and all for visitors at Tuolumne Lodge. Law Enforcement and Search and Rescue personnel and facilities should perhaps be the only exception to this historic and cultural practice. This serves to remind visitors and employees alike of the unique seasonal nature of the Tuolumne Area.

7. Implement truly sustainable and low impact infrastructure, such as solar composting of human waste, which would serve to limit the wastewater treatment of such waste and decrease the footprint of this practice in Tuolumne Meadows. Limit the number of full hook-up campsites to the current number to maintain the rustic nature of camping in this area.

8. Provide sensible public transportation between major facilities and trailheads

9. Consider all impacts to sensitive wildlife in devising the EIS Alternatives. Conduct at minimum Wildlife Habitat Relations analysis and assess impacts to all park sensitive species, including meadow, aquatic, lentic, and forest, and rock habitat.

Tuolumne Meadows is too unique and majestic to construct any developments that would divert attention from its main attraction - uninterrupted High Sierra landscape. In all planning considerations, please maintain and do not compromise this value.

Thanks for your attention to these points and to your efforts in this planning process.

Jeff Maurer

[REDACTED]
El Portal CA 95318

via email



Tuolumne_Plan_scoping_comments.doc



"michael ross"

09/07/2006 03:20 PM
MST

To: <YOSE_Planning@nps.gov>
cc:
Subject: Tuolumne Planning

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TWSR-284-ELS
SEP 07 2006
P. 182
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Tuolumne Planning Team,

I have worked for Yosemite Association teaching field classes since 1977. I have taught many seminars in Tuolumne and am very familiar with the flora and fauna, and the changes that have occurred in visitation over the last thirty years. In the 80's Jim Sano and I recorded 40 hours of history tapes with Carl Sharsmith. Much of it was about Tuolumne from the 30's-60's. My comments will reflect this background.

Restoration:

My main concern is any major construction changes that will occur as a result of future plans. The subalpine and alpine zones are very sensitive to impact and slow to recover. Though we have improved our ability to do small scale restoration of plant communities, there are many areas in Tuolumne that have not fully recovered from past damage.

1. The old Sierra Club parking lot at Soda Springs- This highly visited and visible area has not recovered at all since it was last used over 30 something years ago. Recovery was hampered by horse rangers using the area for riding practice- an activity that was only halted in the summer of 2005.
2. The old Tioga Rd. in Dana Meadows. Last used in the late 30's the road is still clearly visible.
3. Old campsites around soda springs and old car tracks are still visible even though non-campground camping ended in the 40's.

Invasive Species:

1. The European dandelion has appeared in one or two Tuolumne's meadows during the last few decades, but within the last three years it has been found growing in large numbers. This is alarming because there are so few non-natives that survive well at this elevation.

2. Brown-headed cowbirds did not occur in Tuolumne Meadows until the Concession stable where built at their current site in Tuolumne. They have been studied in the past, but what is the impact of these birds at the current time? Is this recreational facility, the stables, in conflict with the need to minimize or eliminate an invasive species?

Carrying Capacity:

It is obvious to anyone who has been in Tuolumne for more than 10 seasons that the roadside recreation (picnicking, strolling, climbing, photographing, and fishing) have increased dramatically along with the number of use-parking spaces. The meadows are being worn, there are traffic safety issues, and the scenic integrity of Tuolumne Meadows is being compromised. Looking out across the Meadows from the north side or from peaks, the presence of large numbers of cars is jarring. As the number of day visitors increase, what will Tuolumne look like, how much will the Meadows be damaged, and how many unnecessary accidents will occur. The number of cars that can park in the meadows area may have passed the carry capacity for this delicate and scenic area. What is the proper number of spaces that should be allowed? Can Tuolumne afford more parking lots, stores, etc.?

Sanitation:

The addition of vault toilets to many locations on the Tioga Rd is a welcome addition except the current design/maintenance that the odor in most of them is foul. I have been elsewhere where similar outhouses are free of such odors. When bathrooms stink, many visitors just use pullouts for toilets.

TWSP-284-215
p. 2072

Check out some of these areas to witness how water quality on the upper Tuolumne is being threatened

In the past the Tuolumne Sewage ponds has leaked raw sewage into the river. They leaked for more than one season.

Baseline Studies:

Efforts during the last few years have brought about a better knowledge of Tuolumne flora and plant ecosystems, but there is still very little known about invertebrate life. There needs to be an extensive cataloging of species before any plans are finalized. In the Soda Springs area there is a wingless crane fly that was collected in the 1930's that I believe is found nowhere else. What undiscovered species are there and could they possibly be affected by projects? Birds also need to be thoroughly studied. We have a fair idea of species that are found here, but what are the population dynamics and are any species being adversely affected by increased visitor use?

Cutbacks in Staffing:

There are less interpreters in the Mather District than there were in the 1970's when there were far less visitors. Interpreters are vital in conserving natural and cultural resources through education of visitors. With the trend of decreasing educational services and increasing visitation there seems to be a disconnect in management. Many of the current visitors are first time or one time visitors to the high country. They don't know that a meadow is not a field to play frisbee in or that they should not walk in wet meadows or on paths across meadows.

Sincerely,

Michael Elsohn Ross
EI Portal, CA 95318



Carol Blaney

09/07/2006 01:06 PM
MST

To: Planning Yosemite <yose_planning@nps.gov>, chris_geis@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: Tuolumne scoping comments

RECEIVED

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SEP 07 2006

P. 1079
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Hello Chris,

I'm attaching my comments for the Tuolumne plans. I'll call to confirm your receipt of them.
Thanks!

Carol Blaney

Talk is cheap. Use Yahoo! Messenger to make PC-to-Phone calls. Great rates starting at 1¢/min.



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Comments on the Tuolumne River and Tuolumne Meadows Plans

7 September 2006

From: Carol Blaney

El Portal, CA 95318

**To: Superintendent Michael Tollefson
Yosemite National Park, CA 95389**

Dear Superintendent Tollefson:

I'm a Tuolumne NPS interpreter in my third full season of living and working in the High Sierra. I'm writing to comment on the Tuolumne River and Tuolumne Meadows plans as a member of the public.

I first came to work in Tuolumne as an NPS volunteer in August of 2003. My husband, our 4-year-old daughter and I took a six-week break from our life in San Jose, and we all fell so deeply in love with Tuolumne that we sold our house, my husband left his job as a software engineer, and we moved to this area, hoping to find a way to stay here. I was offered a job as a seasonal interpreter in May of 2004, and we have been here since.

What I love about Tuolumne is that it is a place like no other in the world, with its own character and charm, history, and a beauty and spirit evident in each curve of the Tuolumne River, each granite slab, each rocky peak. This place is ethereally beautiful. From river-drenched low spots reflecting granite domes during the spring thaw, to pink shooting stars rising up out of the marshy meadow, to the great bowl of blue sky and stars stretching above, Tuolumne calls to the human spirit, regardless of who we are and where we come from. As we plan for Tuolumne's future, I hope that we protect this area from further development and safeguard its vital and tangible sense of place.

I love Tuolumne's light; its birdsong and other natural sounds; its dark night sky; its plant diversity and abundance; its animal diversity and abundance; its cold mornings and crisp nights; its rustic quality; its history (both human and geological); its community of people who work and visit here; and the feeling that this is the edge of the human-inhabited world – all paths from here lead to wilderness and adventure.

Tuolumne needs to be preserved *whole*. That wholeness – the sense that this place is not fragmented by development or misuse – makes Tuolumne what it is.

Tuolumne, in all its moods, invites human exploration in myriad ways:

1. **walking:** hiking, strolling, exploring, backpacking
2. **resting:** relaxing, napping, reading, sitting around campfires

3. **picnicking**
4. **creating art:** drawing and painting, making and listening to music, doing photography, writing poetry and letters
5. **learning:** observing wildlife, studying natural and human history, listening to lectures at Parsons, catching (and releasing) insects, attending ranger walks, exploring geology, doing research of all kinds, visiting Parsons Lodge and McCauley Cabin
6. **observing:** birding, identifying plants and fungi, observing wildlife, making nature notebooks
7. **playing:** making snowballs, throwing sticks and rocks in the river, telling stories, singing, shopping for souvenirs, making fairy houses, whittling
8. **horseback riding**
9. **swimming:** wading, skinnydipping
10. **climbing**
11. **living:** raising children, camping, telling stories, finding and eating wild berries
12. **adventuring:** creating memories and stories
13. **finding inspiration:** enjoying natural sounds, learning about the heroes who shaped this place, attending campfire programs, gazing at the stars
14. **fishing**
15. **driving and sightseeing**

To protect this place, I would like to see the Tuolumne River Plan and the Tuolumne Plan take several important steps, which are listed briefly here, and detailed below.

1. Preserve (and recreate) a healthy meadow ecosystem dominated by natural processes that offers visitors a chance to explore, while keeping the place intact.
2. Preserve a wild, and beautiful river dominated by natural processes that offers visitors a chance to explore, while keeping the place intact.
3. Maintain and encourage the community of employees who are deeply connected to Tuolumne and work together to protect it and assist park visitors.
4. Maintain the cultural landscape where historic buildings and places are preserved, so people can enjoy them.

Following are detailed descriptions of these ideas:

1. Preserve (and recreate) a healthy meadow ecosystem dominated by natural processes that offers visitors a chance to explore, while keeping the place intact.

Tuolumne Meadows is a fragile subalpine area with a short growing season and heavy visitation during that season. Many visitors have no knowledge of the meadow's fragility, and unintentionally damage it by walking off-trail through wet areas, spilling onto the meadow in large groups from tour buses, putting up rows of lawn chairs on fragile river banks, playing Frisbee at Soda Springs, picnicking on the meadow in large family groups, playing baseball, and walking dogs through ground-squirrel habitat.

Part of this problem may arise because only two established and signed trails through the meadow (both leading to Soda Springs) offer visitors a way to explore this place. To compensate, people have created dozens of social trails – from the store to Parsons Lodge, along both riverbanks, to and around the back of Pothole Dome, and to the Tuolumne Cascades, among others. These trails crisscross fragile areas. They are heavily spiderwebbed and trenched in some areas, and they spawn new social trails stretching away from them in several directions.

In addition, multiple roadside parking spots offer an invitation to park and walk out into the meadow anywhere along Tioga Road. This approach might work in a hardier environment with fewer visitors. But in a fragile subalpine meadow with tens of thousands of visitors annually, this offtrail tracking hits the place hard. Tuolumne is considered by some to be an overflow for a crowded Yosemite Valley, but this approach will degrade the meadow in the long run.

We need to determine how many people can use the Tuolumne area without damaging its health, and we need to find effective ways to hold visitor use to this level. Perhaps combining VERP methods (a long-term view) with quotas (an in-the-moment determination) would be the best approach.

We also need to select, route, and maintain trails in a way that fulfills the NPS mission: balancing meadow health with visitor enjoyment in a way that protects the meadow for future generations.

We could do this by:

- Determining baseline natural processes (e.g. composition of plant and animal communities, hydrology, soils)
- Determining which human uses are consistent with meadow health
- Determining the human carrying capacity for these uses (e.g. for walking, fishing, picnicking)
- For walking, trail use, and gathering, we need to answer the following kinds of questions:
 - Where are trails are needed and where they can be removed?
 - In areas where trails are needed, determine the type of trail (dirt, boardwalk, other) that enhances meadow health and visitor enjoyment
 - Seek trail experience from other NPS sites
 - Would adding a couple of developed trails in the meadow or along the river offer a variety of options and reduce the number of social trails?
 - Is it best to spread out and walk across the meadow or to stay on established or social trails?
 - Does walking across the meadow in large groups disrupt plant communities or animal habitat?
 - Does sitting by the river in lawn chairs weaken the bank?

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- Would removing most roadside parking along the meadow reduce meadow degradation?

Once we determine how best to protect the meadow, we need to find effective ways to educate visitors about how to do this.

We could begin the education process by:

- Developing a simple consistent message about protecting meadows
- Developing materials for reaching park staff (both NPS and park partners) with this message
- Placing the message in written materials for visitors, including:
 - Hiking sheets
 - Maps
 - *Yosemite Today*
- Developing appropriate interpretive signs about meadow protection and placing them at strategic locations, including roadsides, visitor centers and other visitor gathering places
- Educating bus tour companies and other large groups about appropriate meadow use.
- Incorporating these protection messages into ranger programs and other outreach efforts.

If I listen closely in Tuolumne, I can hear the sounds that make the meadow area what it is – the scritch of chipmunks racing up the lodgepole pines, the whistling of a marmot family that noticed a coyote on the prowl, the magical gurgle of the Tuolumne River rushing over granite.

As part of the Tuolumne soundscape research, this summer, I sat and simply listened for 8 hours – in 20, 30 and 60-minute chunks – marking the natural and human-made sounds I heard.

The bird sounds were constant. Early in the year, the pewees called in the early morning and the killdeer, in the evening. In late summer, the crossbills raucously chattered in large groups, flying from tree to tree seeking their cones to crack. All was a glorious symphony, the likes of which Muir probably heard.

But underlying (and sometimes overwhelming) these natural sounds in the present day are the crash of dumpsters and the clop of mules tottering heavy-laden across the Tuolumne River bridge. And topping even these noises is a constant parade of jets, propeller planes and military aircraft cruising overhead, and RVs, Harleys, and cars zipping down Tioga Road.

The meadow needs relief from the loudest sounds of humanity, so visitors can hear the natural sounds of a national park.

What makes Tuolumne lovely is not just the natural sounds, but the feast it offers for the eyes. Sitting on the porch of the cabin where I spend summers, I can look up to the rose-colored evening glow on the Kuna Crest, watch the sun glint on glacial polish on Lembert Dome, and see the meadow turn from lush green to gold across the season. Very little development scars this view and a thousand others – a marvelous Tuolumne attribute.

What development exists here is relatively hidden. To preserve Tuolumne's unique viewscape and character, it should remain this way. Some buildings also could be removed to enhance the area: Because Tuolumne is such a fragile place, having a gas station here makes little sense. In addition, the bright lights at the Tuolumne Store (and at the Tuolumne Stables) should be shut off (or toned down) at night, to preserve the darkness of the night sky.

I've heard some people comment that Tuolumne needs beautiful buildings to fit its character – perhaps a store of granite and wood, or a large lodge. But part of this place's uniqueness is its ephemeral quality – where we only visit a few months each year. For many months, Tuolumne is blanketed in snow. Most of the buildings – tent cabins left open to the elements in winter – are ephemeral as well.

The ephemeral nature of Tuolumne's structures also reduces the likelihood of further year-round development here. I think we should keep this place seasonal – not only for esthetic reasons (and novelty too – where else do you see a store in a tent?) but because of the fragility of subalpine meadows. The more pressure we put on the place – opening it up to longer seasons or building a bigger _____ (fill in the blank) to allow for more visitation, the more we risk damaging the meadow. And protecting the place for future generations is our mission. If we are to maintain the character of this place as a “wilderness outpost” prohibiting further development is crucial.

2. Preserve a wild and beautiful river dominated by natural processes that offers visitors a chance to explore, while keeping the place intact.

The Tuolumne makes the same music it has made for eons – wild and lovely, evocative of past eras. In order to keep this place protected, I would like to see as much of the Tuolumne River as possible designated as “wild.” Specifically, the section of the Dana Fork that is undeveloped but designated as “scenic” should be shifted to “wild” status.

In addition, we should prevent further development along any stretch of the river and keep the Tuolumne Meadows buildings spread out, with a rural feel, rather than consolidating them into a more urban-style development.

Stock use is hard on meadows, trails, and the river. Heavily traveled trails – especially along Lyell Canyon and to the High Sierra camps – are ground to dusty canyons that are difficult to walk on and filled with dung. Stock turned out to feed in the meadows along the river eat fragile plant life, leave more dung, trample native animals' burrows, and damage water quality. One way to allow for this type of historical use is to prohibit off-trail travel, and limit stock to a very few trails.

There is likely to be pressure to open the Tuolumne to boating – perhaps kayaking in the Grand Canyon and rafting in the meadow. I think we should continue to prohibit boating on the Tuolumne River because such uses demand more development (intake and landing areas, shuttle parking, etc.), which is inconsistent with the river's outstandingly remarkable values.

Other areas of the park provide ample spots for boating. And in the Valley, where rafting is allowed, there is pressure to make management decisions related to rafting safety, rather than river processes. This is understandable; however, if we do not allow rafting, this pressure will not come to bear on the Tuolumne, so it will remain a unique example of a wild river.

Social trails run along the river in many areas. Near Soda Springs, I have seen large chunks of the bank cave in this summer, as a result of heavy use. We need to decide how to handle use trails along the river, either by maintaining or rerouting them, or by developing some other solution.

3. Maintain and encourage the community of employees who are deeply connected to Tuolumne and work together to protect it and assist park visitors.

Tuolumne staff have a long history of working together inter-divisionally to protect this place. Typically, staff members are experienced and have worked in other parks, or other areas of the park, before coming here, and they have a deep passion for this place and the NPS mission. I encourage NPS actions to preserve this high level of commitment and cooperation.

I've heard suggestions that staff be moved out of Tuolumne in order to reduce our footprint in the park. However, if fewer staff live in the area to protect it and educate visitors about it, more (typically unintentional) damage by visitors is likely to occur. In addition, moving staff to Lee Vining would cause impact on another natural area, and add to greenhouse gas emissions as well. It would also crush employee morale, an important Tuolumne asset.

It's beneficial for Tuolumne staff to live in Tuolumne in several ways:

- For the park: living where we work allows us to know this place intimately, to sense changes that are occurring here, to take actions to

protect the place, and to interpret both the changes and those actions to other staff and to park visitors. If we were to live elsewhere, we would not notice those changes (e.g. differences in weather, visitor use, wildlife behavior, etc.) before they became too great to respond to effectively.

- For visitors: If we live here, we can respond quickly to visitor emergencies, give correct and detailed information about how to enjoy and protect the park, and give visitors a clearer sense of this place and its value to them and to humanity.
- For staff: If we commute, we would lose precious time and gas traveling on a dangerous road that has more than enough traffic already. We would be less likely to spend our days off getting to know Tuolumne. Instead of a passionate way of life, working here would become a job. (I've seen this happen in Yosemite Valley as a result of long commutes.)

In Tuolumne, offering a diversity of housing types would be the ideal way to handle housing to protect the park, enhance staff morale and preserve the Tuolumne experience.. Having a majority of tent cabins and a small number of hard-sided cabins would offer flexibility to supervisors making housing decisions. Tent cabins are beautiful, simple, and fun to live in – they keep us in touch with the natural world that most of us are here to revel in. (My family's experience in a tent cabin contributed to our giving up a comfortable city life to live and work here.) In addition, for the reasons mentioned above, they are ideal housing for this seasonally used environment.

Hard-sided cabins are functional, though more detached from the ebb and flow of the seasons. They would be ideal for law-enforcement rangers and other staff who need a private place to retreat from the rigors of shift work or challenging interactions with visitors. In addition, they would provide more warmth and comfort during the blustery shoulder seasons.

Group housing would be unappealing, both because of the additional building it would require and the fact that it would force people to live in very close quarters, when most of us already work intensely with people all day long.

Whatever housing is provided, it should be easy on the land and on staff who maintain it. It should also be made safe (e.g. by mouseproofing as much as possible to prevent hantavirus exposure, repairing floors, removing peeling paint) and able to provide warmth (i.e. the pellet stoves should be repaired or replaced).

4. Maintain the cultural landscape where historic buildings and places are preserved, so people can enjoy them.

I would suggest keeping the Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center intact and in use, so people can see Tuolumne buildings from an earlier era. I also would suggest not consolidating buildings into a "mall," which seems antithetical to Tuolumne's character and could drastically increase the footprint affecting the meadow's hydrology.

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Last, I would suggest upgrading some facilities, such as the campground restrooms. Some of these are beautiful on the outside and appalling on the inside. Leaving their historic character intact while upgrading the plumbing would offer a much more positive visitor experience, while not harming the place.



Michael Burke

09/07/2006 01:24 PM
MST

To: yose_planning@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: Tuolumne Meadows

RECEIVED
TWSR-286-EIS
SEP 07 2006
P.182
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Superintendent, Yosemite National Park:

I will try to organize my comments by responding to your questions.

What do I love about the Tuolumne River and Tuolumne Meadows?

First, I love the obvious -- the meadows and the river. I think both are currently in good condition, although I have been watching the encroachment of trees into the meadows, particularly opposite the store, for a period of 40 years. I do worry about that. I wonder if you can make a case for tree removal (the new, small trees) to preserve the meadow. I love the sunshine, the crisp air, the water, the sounds of the river and the breezes, and the still quiet.

What do I do while I am there?

I use Tuolumne Meadows as an entry/exit point for hiking and backpacking. In addition, I spend a fair amount of time in the meadows. I like to walk to the two footbridges from the lodge or the campground, and then to find a quiet place along the river to sit, read, nap. I sit by the small creek that flows into the meadows near the Sunrise trailhead. I often walk out to Soda Springs, and then either up or down the river, at sunset to watch the colors over the meadows. I love Parson's Lodge. I picnic. I swim. I also occasionally eat dinner at the lodge, and I love to sit before or after dinner with a glass of wine by the falls -- that's a lovely spot.

What would I like to see protected?

The meadows and the river.

Services and Facilities?

I would keep the store and grill, although it seems that for the last few summers the store has been very poorly stocked. The food offered by the grill could certainly be improved without increasing the cost. I think the gas station is a necessity, and I think Tuolumne Meadows is an appropriate place for a mountain shop. The lodge location, along the Dana Fork, is excellent, and I love the lodge, itself. I like the insubstantial nature of the tent structures (store, lodge) -- I would not change that. I'm not particularly fond of the horses and stables -- I think the horses are an intrusion on the trails. I would like to recommend removal of the stables, but I recognize that they are necessary to stock the High Sierra Camps.

The High Sierra Camps are great. They offer a unique experience. I worry about the commitment of Delaware North to the High Sierra Camps -- it seems that they open weeks later than they used to or (in the case of last summer) do not open at all.

Of course, the Tuolumne Meadows Campground must stay. It would be nice to update the restrooms for the campground.

Parking is certainly a problem. There is not enough parking at or

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near the Wilderness Permit Office, which also serves as a trailhead for several trails. And the parking along the Tioga Road for the Sunrise trailhead is an eyesore -- there needs to be a substantial parking lot there, tucked back into the trees like the parking for the Visitor Center. The dusty parking along the road from Lumbert Dome toward Soda Springs could also be improved.

I would not like any additional stores, structures, businesses. I pretty much like the facilities in the meadows the way they are.

Thank you for your consideration, and I looking forward to hearing from you as the planning process continues.

Michael Burke

[REDACTED]
Redwood City, CA
94062